



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY

June 1, 2011

The Honorable Deval Patrick
Office of the Governor
State House, Room 360
Boston, Massachusetts 02133

Dear Governor Patrick:

I am writing in response to Massachusetts' request to amend its approved Race to the Top grant project. On April 5, 2011, the State submitted amendment requests to the U.S. Department of Education (Department); the State then provided additional clarification as requested during the month of April. As you are aware, the Department has the authority to approve amendments to your plan and budget, provided that such a change does not alter the scope or objectives of the approved proposal. On January 6, 2011, the Department sent a letter and "Grant Amendment Submission Process" document to Governors of grantee States indicating the process by which amendments would be reviewed and approved or denied. To determine whether approval could be granted, the Department has applied the conditions noted in the document, and compared it with the Race to the Top program *Principles*, which are also included in that document.

I am pleased to approve the following amendments:

- For the project area of Data Systems to Support Instruction, in the project "Transform state data systems," reduce the number of local educational agencies (LEAs) served by the Schools Interoperability Framework (SIF) project from all LEAs (393) to the participating LEAs (258). SIF is designed to facilitate the exchange of data between LEAs and the State. The State had originally estimated that it would cost approximately \$17,000 per LEA to implement SIF for their student information and human resources systems, but the cost currently averages about \$25,000 to \$30,000 per LEA. Given that revised cost estimate, the State will not be able to serve all LEAs. Note that LEAs who do not implement the SIF have other means to submit data. An optional performance measure has been adjusted to align with these changes.

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The Department of Education's mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.

- For the project area of Data Systems to support Instruction, in the projects “Transform state data systems,” “Data systems and technology for Teaching and Learning System,” and “Educator supports for data use,” shift timeframes and funds to reflect delays due to: (a) an emerging problem with the performance and reporting of the Education Data Warehouse (EDW), the State’s statewide longitudinal data system, (b) issues establishing the Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems Grant (SLDS) accounts and with contracting, and (c) difficulty finding project managers at the salary levels available through the State human resources system. In particular: (1) Shift resources for Race to the Top data systems personnel from salaries for individuals who have not yet been hired to contract in year 1. (2) Shift resources from unspent salaries to contracts to provide project management and IT services, and to enable the State to pay more competitive salaries for the Race to the Top test builder and digital library project managers. (3) Shift timelines by one year for the following Race to the Top projects, and make corresponding budgetary changes: A. Project to add additional data sets to the EDW to ensure it is useful to the users who will be added to the system; B. Project to improve the usability of public data Profiles; C. Collection of discipline data through the Schools Interoperability Framework (SIF) project; D. Launch of test builder; E. Adding resources to the Digital Library; F. PreK-12 teaching and learning system; (4) Data team leader endorsements shift from year 2 to year 3 due to a request in the "Great teachers and leaders" section.

This request is granted with the following condition: the State will provide additional information to the Department’s Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems Grant (SLDS) team during the regular monthly SLDS progress updates to allow the Department to better track the State’s progress on SLDS and Race to the Top-funded work in the area of data systems. The Department’s Implementation and Support Unit (ISU) will work with the State and the SLDS team to determine what information is required. In addition, the Department may ask for further updates during Race to the Top program monthly calls.

- For the project area of Great Teachers and Leaders, in the project “Ensure equitable distribution of effective teachers and leaders: SPED/ELL courses”: (1) Reduce the number of newly licensed English as a Second Language (ESL) and special education teachers that the State proposes to serve under the Race to the Top grant. The new target is based on the number of district-based teachers who are teaching on waivers to state licensure requirements for moderate disability special education and ESL. The State will provide support for teachers who hold a licensure already to gain ESL and special education licenses, such that there are 468 newly licensed ESL and special education teachers by the end of the grant period. (2) The State now believes that it will not be feasible for teachers to take coursework and receive licensure in one year. Based on further analysis, the State understands that teachers need more additional coursework than previously anticipated. As a result, licensing of the first group of teachers shifts from year 2 to year 3.
- For the project area of Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools, in the project “Develop specialized corps of turnaround teacher and leader teams”: (1) Select the first class of proven teachers in year 3 (to be placed in year 3) instead of in year 1 (to be placed in year 2). The State has assessed turnaround LEA’s staffing needs, and believes that the initial timing proposed does not make sense. Under Massachusetts State law,

LEAs had the opportunity to require staff to reapply for their positions for the 2010-2011 school year, so most LEAs used that opportunity to remove ineffective staff and strengthen the effectiveness of their teachers and leaders by bringing in promising staff from other schools within their LEA or from outside the LEA. The LEAs with these schools have indicated that they have needs for individual hires for next year (2011-12), but not for teams of teachers or leaders. Several anticipate needing teams of either leaders or teachers for the following year, 2012-13. (2) Adjust the number of teachers served to 200 to reflect the State's updated assessment of the need for this service. (3) Related to these requests, the State will reduce consulting support in year 1 by \$150,000 and year 2 by \$50,000 and reallocate those funds to year 3; the State will also eliminate grant funding to support districts implementing this program in year 1 (\$210,000 total) and redistribute those funds into years 2, 3, and 4.

- For the project area of Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools, in the project, "Develop, attract, and manage lead partners and turnaround operators to execute the restart model at Level 4 and 5 schools": (1) Shift the start of incubation of a nonprofit intermediary from year 1 to year 2, as the State now realizes that the intermediary would not be needed until at least year 3. This change reflects the fact that the State has been able to support restart efforts without an intermediary, and no additional schools will use the restart model until year 3 at the earliest. The State notes that this work may be further shifted depending on: (a) the State's need to intervene at Level 4 schools and the effectiveness of other turnaround activities; (b) the possibility that one of the organizations working with schools currently will prove to have a strong impact and would be interested in working with other schools in the State. (2) In a related change, shift all funds for the startup of the intermediary in year 1 and a portion of funds in years 2 and 3 to reflect the need for funding for turnaround operator per-school costs in year 2.
- For the project area of Turning Around the Lowest Achieving Schools: (1) Adjust the performance measure regarding the number of schools for which one of the four-school intervention models will be initiated. The State had anticipated that it would identify 45 Level 4 schools in year 1. MA intended to fund these schools through the School Improvement Grant program, but when it received the applications from the districts, it learned that more than the \$500,000/school estimated previously would be required to support the schools. As a result, the State believes it can only afford to appropriately support 35 schools in year 1. The State proposes to add 10 more schools in year 2, and then maintain that group of 45 for a year. In year 4, the State expects that some of the 45 schools will move to Level 3 (due to improvements), and another 20 schools in Level 4 status will be added. (2) Clarify that Priority Providers will now be referred to as Priority Partners. This is a change in terminology only.

In addition, I am pleased to approve the amendments described in the attached chart, which relate primarily to timeline and budget shifts, or other clarifications.

It is our understanding that these amendments will not result in a change in outcomes, nor will they substantially change the scope of work.

I am confident that Massachusetts will continue its bold, comprehensive reform efforts. If you need any assistance or have any questions regarding Race to the Top, please do not hesitate to contact your Race to the Top Program Officer, Bridget Kelly, at 202-453-5534 or bridget.kelly@ed.gov.

Sincerely,

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Ann Whalen
Director, Policy and Program Implementation
Implementation and Support Unit

cc: Commissioner Mitchell Chester
Carrie Conaway

Grant project area affected	Specific project	Description of change
A: State Success Factors	Overall project management and evaluation	(1) Complete project plans and evaluation designs by May 2011 instead of January 2011, due to hiring delays and interdependencies of project plans. (2) Move savings incurred by a delay in hiring the IT project manager to contracts for IT project management. (3) Move funds that will not be expended in year 1 for the activity of adding a performance management component to the state grants management system into year 2, with expected savings on this project to be reallocated in a future request.
B: Standards and Assessments	Implementing Common Standards and developing Common Assessments	(1) Clarify that the project to implement the Common Core State Standards includes not only aligning standards documents, but also implementing the standards statewide and making adjustments to the state assessment system to align with the Common Core. (2) Clarify that during the transition to the Common Core, in some subjects and grades state assessments may include items aligned to the old standards as well as the new Common Core. (3) Remove the date associated with the MCAS history assessment (2012) from the scope of work, reflecting a lack of State funds for this program that is delaying implementation.
B: Standards and Assessments	Model curriculum maps and units	(1) Shift alignment of English language proficiency standards to Common Core English language arts standards from year 1 to year 2 to allow the state more time to see the progress of English Language Development Assessment and World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment. The social studies standards alignment moves from year 2 to year 3. (2) \$40,000 in funds move from year 1 to year 4, since the State now anticipates that more work will happen in later years.
B: Standards and Assessments	Build a digital library	Delete reference to Thinkfinity in the scope of work activity, "Expand WGBH Teacher's Domain," to allow for time to explore further the role of the Thinkfinity partnership and other possible partners.
B: Standards and Assessments	Develop interim and formative assessment system	(1) Launch of development of interim and formative assessments shifts from year 1 to year 2, due to difficulty finding a project manager. The timeframe shift also allows the State to better align its efforts with the work of the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), a Race to the Top Assessment grantee, to ensure that there are not duplicative efforts. (2) Related to the timeline shifts, the budget for the formative/interim assessment online testing coordinator is reduced by \$56,000 in year 1 and the budget for help desk specialists increases in year 2 by the same amount; travel for the coordinator in year 1 is reduced by \$2,000 and moves to the assessment contractor; travel for the interim assessment advisory committee is decreased by \$1,800 in year 1 and distributed evenly over years 2 through 4; funds for year 1 for the assessment contractor are reduced by \$84,000 and redistributed over years 2 through 4. (3) Broaden the approach to online assessment to include the possibility of purchasing an online assessment system rather than building one from scratch, allowing the State to ensure it will be able to select the most cost-effective solution that meets the State's needs. (4) For the optional performance measure regarding the percentage of Massachusetts standards documents aligned to Common Core State Standards: the State proposes to adjust the percentages to make performance measures in units of ninths, since there will be nine standards documents. The percentages are also adjusted due to the changes described above.

Grant project area affected	Specific project	Description of change
B: Standards and Assessments	Design curriculum-embedded performance tasks	(1) Pilot testing of the curriculum-embedded performance tasks (CEPTs), formerly referred to as “extended performance tasks,” shifts from year 1 to year 2. As a result, teachers will not pilot the tasks until fall of school year 2011-12, and publishing of tasks with student work will not take place until year 2. (2) Since the CEPT project manager and vocational-technical task specialist are not yet hired, the State proposes to reallocate those funds to years 2 through 4 to allow for more competitive salaries. (3) The State will now create 100 CEPTs overall instead of 144 to 172 due to lessons learned from work this spring, specifically: (a) that it is more costly to create the CEPTs than originally estimated, and (b) the State’s determination that CEPTs are more likely to be used effectively by teachers when they are integrated with, rather than independent of, materials related to the content of a curriculum unit. The State now proposes to develop at least two CEPTs for each of the subject-grade areas for which it is developing model curriculum units: 25 apiece for English language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science. (4) Related performance measure: The optional measure regarding the number of CEPTs in each year decreases to align with a refined approach to the CEPTs and the revised cost estimate.
B: Standards and Assessments	Increase college and career readiness	(1) Clarify that the number of educators to receive pre-AP training is 1,000. (2) The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and Board of Higher Education vote on curriculum and college admission requirements moves from year 1 to year 2. The State has commissioned an analysis of State high school curriculum requirements to help determine the best approach, and is collecting data on student course enrollments for the first time statewide that will inform detailed gap analyses. As a result, this timeline shift permits the State to make these requirements more meaningful by basing the recommendations to the Board on a strong assessment of the existing data. (3) Related performance measure: Mass Core will not be the required curriculum and aligned with college admission requirements until year 2, resulting in a change to an optional performance measure.
B: Standards and Assessments	Overall	Due to the departure of the individual leading the Standards and Assessment project area, reassign leadership of that project to several other individuals within the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.
B: Standards and Assessments	Overall	(1) Clarify that for the optional performance measure regarding the percentage of LEAs using one or more components of the teaching and learning system would be calculated using the total number of LEAs participating in the project to develop and implement the system (n=191), not the percent of all participating districts (n=258). (2) Shift the timeframe for use of components of the teaching and learning system to year 3 due to requests in "Data Systems to Support Instruction." (3) Test the system with a smaller number of districts to focus on quality of implementation.

Grant project area affected	Specific project	Description of change
D: Great teachers and leaders	Improve teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	<p>(1) Combine three contracts – Develop statewide evaluation framework and tools, technical assistance and training, and implementation support staff – into one called Implementation Support. This change will make it easier to coordinate the work and allow for better alignment of efforts. As part of that alignment, remove the reference to "cadres of coaches," to reflect that the contractor will provide supports to districts for improving their Human Resources systems, but may opt to use a slightly different approach. (2) Dissemination of exemplars of usage of HR models shifts from year 3 to year 4 to permit time to implement in the pilot districts and to learn from the results of implementing the teacher evaluation system in both Level 4 schools and schools in other participating districts. (3) Establishing district exemplars for measuring growth in non-tested subjects shifts from year 1 to year 2 to allow for work in summer 2011; districts will still be able to use these in school year 2011-12. (4) Development of training modules and other supports for implementing the educator evaluation framework begins in year 1 but will carry over into year 2, with some funds moving into year 2 as a result. (5) Activities related to developing principal and teacher-leader performance assessments and endorsements to licensure shift by a year due to delays in hiring staff. (6) Test builder development moves from year 2 to year 3 to align with requests in the "Data systems to support instruction" section.</p>
D: Great teachers and leaders	Ensure equitable distribution of effective teachers and leaders	<p>(1) The MassTeLLS survey will move from year 1 to year 2, based on feedback from districts about when they would use this information for district planning. The original spring timeframe would have meant that the data was old when used in winter 2011 for district planning. As a result, sharing of exemplars of school condition and culture initiatives does not occur until year 3, after districts have the chance to use the feedback from the survey. Funds move from year 1 to year 2 as a result. (2) The statewide diversity summit moves from year 1 to year 2 due to delays in hiring qualified staff and focus on other areas. Associated costs move from year 1 to year 2. (3) The Status of the Educator Workforce report would be published biannually rather than annually, due to the State's recognition that the data do not shift substantially from year to year. The Readiness Centers will use the reports to create targeted teacher workforce development strategies, and a new report every other year is sufficient for this purpose. (4) The budget for the expansion of the aMAzingteachers website and improvements to the Massachusetts Educator Career Center does not reflect that much of the work takes place in year 2. Funds shift to year 2 to align with the State's scope of work. (5) Launch of a network for high needs schools moves from year 1 to year 2 in response to feedback from the relevant districts; this change is expected to better meet districts' needs. (6) Developing online courses on teaching special education and English language learner students will be completed in fall 2011, instead of summer 2011, resulting in a shift into year 2.</p>

Grant project area affected	Specific project	Description of change
D: Great teachers and leaders	Professional development for educators	Shift timelines for the activity regarding professional development (PD) for educators, due to delays in hiring the PD coordinator. In particular: (1) Work on developing online course in teaching special education and English language learner students will not be completed until year 2, representing a shift from summer 2011 to fall 2011. (2) The professional development approval process design moves from year 1 to year 2, and implementation of the process and selection of providers moves to year 3. (3) For the development of PD assessment tools activity, statewide dissemination moves from year 2 to year 3. (4) Due to these delays, use of the tool to evaluate the impact of professional supports will not be used widely until year 3. The State has adjusted the optional performance measure accordingly. The State has taken steps to ensure that it continues to promote high-quality professional development in spite of these delays. In the interim, the State has two strategies to promote high-quality professional development: (1) Only allowing LEAs to spend Race to the Top funds on PD that is determined by the State to be of high-quality and aligned with State priorities; (2) Convening an internal working group of State staff conducting activities related to professional development to better coordinate efforts across units.
E: Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools	Build district capacity to intervene in struggling schools	(1) Clarify in the scope of work that funding for Human Resources experts will not be needed until year 2, as budgeted. The State will provide HR supports directly through the Level 4 district support network in year 1. (Level 4 districts contain at least one school that is persistently lowest-achieving based on both low overall performance and little or no growth in recent years). (2) Clarify in the scope of work that grants to state associations are provided throughout the four-year grant period, to ensure continuous support for districts. (3) Reduce funding for grants to State associations in year 1 to years 2, 3, and 4 to reflect greater anticipated need in those years.

Relevant Performance Measures

Optional Performance Measures	Actual Data: Baseline	End of SY 2010-11	End of SY 2011-12	End of SY 2012-13	End of SY 2013-14
% of LEAs implementing the Common Core Standards	n/a	n/a	100%	100%	100%
% of Massachusetts standards documents aligned to the Common Core	0%	22%	44%	67%	100%
% of grades and subjects with curriculum maps and at least one model curriculum unit	0%	25%	50%	75%	100%
Number of interim assessment forms completed for English and math	n/a	72	90	90	90
Number of curriculum embedded performance tasks developed	n/a	25	50	75	100
% of LEAs participating in the teaching and learning system project that are using one or more component of the teaching and learning system, other than the EDW (<i>also a performance measure for C2</i>)	n/a	n/a	n/a	20%	90%
% of participating LEAs using the interim / formative assessment system	n/a	n/a	35%	75%	75%
% of participating LEAs using curriculum-embedded performance tasks	n/a	n/a	20%	50%	75%
% of high school graduates successfully completing MassCore	50%	55%	65%	75%	85%
Number of Early College High Schools (ECHS) established as a direct result of Race to the Top funding	n/a	n/a	6	6	6
Number of teachers participating in pre-AP training	n/a	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000

Optional Performance Measures	Actual Data: Baseline	End of SY 2010-11	End of SY 2011-12	End of SY 2012-13	End of SY 2013-14
MassCore established as the default curriculum and aligned with four-year college entrance requirements	n/a	n/a	✓	✓	✓
% of high school students with a plan on <i>YourPlanforCollege.com</i> or a similar college and career readiness planning tool	n/a	10%	35%	50%	75%

Optional Performance Measures	Actual Data: Baseline (Current school year or most recent)	End of SY 2010–2011	End of SY 2011–2012	End of SY 2012–2013	End of SY 2013–2014
Number of data sets available in EDW	3	3	4	5	6
Percent of districts using EDW data to improve instruction, assessment, and operations	40%	55%	75%	90%	100%
Percent increase in Profiles traffic after usability improvements and addition of finance and district comparison data	0%	0%	5%	10%	15%
Number of LEAs implementing Schools Interoperability Framework	40	122	146	258	258

Optional Performance Measures	Actual Data: Baseline (Current school year or most recent)	End of SY 2010-2011	End of SY 2011-2012	End of SY 2012-2013	End of SY 2013-2014
% of LEAs using EDW to inform instructional decisions	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%
# of educators trained on how to effectively use data and instructional tools to improve student achievement and growth	100	1,000	5,000	10,000	25,000
% of participating LEAs participating in the teaching and learning system project that are using one or more components of the system, other than the EDW (<i>also a performance measure for B3</i>)	n/a	n/a	n/a	20%	90%
Percentage of user visits during which the teaching & learning system meets published service level agreements for:					
• Availability: continuously available other than at scheduled maintenance times	n/a	n/a	n/a	99%	99%
• Responsiveness: loads pages in less than 3 seconds	n/a	n/a	n/a	95%	99%
• Usability: easy to use and navigate	n/a	n/a	n/a	95%	100%

Optional Performance Measures	Actual Data: Baseline	End of SY 2010- 2011	End of SY 2011- 2012	End of SY 2012- 2013	End of SY 2013- 2014
Revised standards for professional development are complete	n/a	n/a	✓	✓	✓
% of PD offered through DSACs, Readiness Centers, Professional Development Institutes, and ESE grant-funded PD programs that is aligned to new standards	n/a	n/a	50%	75%	100%
Preferred provider list based on new professional development standards is available	n/a	n/a	n/a	✓	✓
% of LEAs using ESE-developed tool and processes to evaluate the impact of professional supports	0%	0%	0%	35%	80%

Performance Measures	Actual Data: Baseline (Current school year or most recent)	End of SY 2010- 2011	End of SY 2011- 2012	End of SY 2012- 2013	End of SY 2013- 2014
The number of schools for which one of the four-school intervention models will be initiated each year.	0	35	10	0	20